

Surprising Turns in a Story of the Days of Youth Which Were Recalled in Later Years

HIS WIFE'S VISITOR

By Henry Kitchell Webster,
in The Star's Series of
American Fiction

The Author
Henry Kitchell Webster.
Like so many of America's big authors, Henry Kitchell Webster began writing at an early age. His first work brought forth stories of mystery—thrillers; he specialized in plot. Then he turned to that form of fiction to material with more substance. For one of the leading magazines he traveled in the tropics and wrote articles, not purely for local color, but studies of the life with a sociological background.
Later came his novels with their portrayals of real people and real problems showing the power of Mr. Webster's mental equipment, for he is a widely cultivated person with a knowledge of the drama, music and literature. He speaks with authority on all of these subjects.
Added to this is the fact that he is one of the very best amateur performers in existence of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas. He both sings them and acts them with talent.
But in his delineation of the American home and the American family that he has built himself a firm place in the affections of the American people.
MARY STEWART CUTTING, Jr.

"Who?" George wanted to know. "I don't know why he should want to. He certainly won't find any material for a play in us. Still, it'll be nice to see him again. I don't suppose I'll know him."
"Look here," George demanded. "Who are you talking about?"
"Oh," she said, as if she had just heard his questions, but it was another moment before she answered it. "Why, it's Charley Hawkins—Hawthorn Hawkins. George, you know who he is."
"I know who Hawthorn Hawkins is, but why do you call him Charley? And why does he call you on the long distance and propose to spend Sunday with us?"
"Why, he's giving the Sheldon lectures down at the university this year, and he looked up Avonia on the map and saw how near it was—he phoned to ask if he could come."
"But, why Avonia, and why us? If you knew him as well as that, why haven't you ever told me anything about him?"
"George," she cried, scandalized, "I told you all about Charley Hawkins when we were first engaged—and you didn't even listen. He wasn't famous then, of course. And I haven't heard from him since the note he wrote with the wedding present he sent us. Now, for goodness sake, don't ask any more questions, but let me eat."

It was from preoccupation rather than the obedience that he left her alone until she rang for the maid. Then, "You haven't been writing to him, have you—telling him he was great and so on?"
Her eyes flashed at him, but the entrance of Anna procured him a polite answer. "I couldn't very well write to him when I'd never seen one of his plays."
"Ever read 'em?" he asked. "They are published, I suppose."
She shook her head and waited until Anna went out, then she swooped upon him. "I never thought you'd be so silly," she declared, "as to be jealous. And about a man I haven't thought of for twenty years. I'm not."
"What are you, then?" she asked with an alkaline sort of smile, and he found the question unanswerable. "Well, I hope you will be decent to him, anyhow."

"I don't know whether I will or not," he told her. "That depends." She didn't speak to him again that night.
Two days later, coming home from a rather strenuous bout of shopping, Emily found her husband—home from the office a good hour earlier than usual—reading a small green paper-covered volume, which he put down hastily as she came in and then took up again and held out to her.
"Three Plays by Hawthorn Hawkins," she read. "Why, where did that come from? I tried to get it at Street's, but they'd never even heard of it."

"Come in the mail," he said. "I found it when I got here."
"Addressed to me?" she asked.
"Why, yes; I believe it was. I opened the package without, thinking."
"Charley sent them on, of course," she remarked, "so that I'd have something to talk to him about."
"I don't believe he did," George said decidedly. "Not unless he's an unusual ass."
She flushed angrily at that, but he went on before she could speak. "I said I thought he wasn't an ass, not that I thought he was. There'd been a card or an inscription if it had come from him. Anyhow, I wouldn't thank him for it unless he gives you a lead. Read 'em and say nothing. And don't leave 'em out on the sitting room table where they'll be the first thing he sees, either."
Her smile conceded that this advice was both friendly and intelligent. "But where did they come from?" she demanded.
"Search me," he told her. "They don't postmark this fourth-class stuff. No, I didn't mean anything uncomplimentary. As far as I read in the first one, it seems pretty good. I thought you might have sent to Chicago for them." She pointed out that there would not have been time. "Oh, well," he concluded, "I don't believe it's much of a mystery. Some old friend, most likely, that he told he was coming, sent it along so that you would surprise him. You'll read 'em tonight, I suppose."

They kept rather carefully away from Charley Hawthorn Hawkins as a conventional topic that night. Next morning, however, just before he left for the office, George suddenly broke the ice by saying: "Don't count on him too much, Emily. He may not come, you know. Send you a telegram this morning."
She asked hotly why he said that, and added, as the suspicion struck her: "I believe you've been telegraphing him yourself not to come." But this injurious charge she at once retracted.
"They're supposed to be sort of temperamental and changeable, that's all," he explained, "and I thought he might change his mind about this."
"You wish he would, I expect," she observed.
"Yes," he answered, unhappily, "I suppose I do."
She gazed at him a moment in mute exasperation. Then her expression softened and she gave a reluctant laugh. "I think you're the most ridiculous person in the world," she said. "I suppose you think he's coming out here to break up our happy home and get me to run away with him."
He looked so glum over this that she gave him up as hopeless. "Oh, go along," she cried. "But I'm going to kiss you first. And you will be home sharp at 4, won't you?"
It was an hour earlier than this that she found him in the dining room unwrapping a package containing two bottles, one of gin and the other of Scotch whisky.



EMILY FOUND HER HUSBAND READING A SMALL GREEN PAPER-COVERED VOLUME, WHICH HE PUT DOWN HASTILY AS SHE CAME IN, AND TOOK UP AGAIN AND HELD OUT TO HER.

"Got 'em for Walter Harbury," he explained sheepishly. "Walter has a regular bootlegger—comes around once a month. Been meaning to lay in something like this for quite a while."
Her astonishment over this bit of unabashed mendacity made it possible for him to get on to something else. He put the bottles away in the sideboard, turned his back upon it and gazed at her so intently that she frowned inquiringly and presently asked: "Well, what is it?"
"Nothing," he said; "only I think you're looking great—just as you are."

Now, this was the unadulterated truth. At forty, after two children and nineteen years of marriage and Avonia, she still looked infinitely desirable to George, and never more so than in the sort of clothes she was wearing now—a small felt hat crammed down upon her small round head (she'd been doing some last-minute marketing), a sweater, a sport skirt, low-heeled shoes; her face moistly flushed, innocent of powder. It was true and Emily knew it was true.
All the same she saw through him and smiled derisively. "So you want me to look like this when Mr. Hawthorn comes?" she asked. "Well, I won't. I'm going up to dress this minute."

"I wish you wouldn't, Emily," he pleaded. "I don't want you to dress up for that chump. I don't want you to do anything—special—for him. I don't see why you should. You don't care anything about him, do you? Nor about what he thinks?"
Her flush deepened as she mused. She reached out suddenly and took hold of him by the ears. "Idiot!" she said. "But in the interval between the two words she kissed him, and she did not dwell up for Mr. Charles Hawthorn Hawkins."

THE visit went off—started off, anyhow—a whole lot better than Emily, who had spent the last hour before the arrival of their guest in wishing petulantly that she had never heard of him, could have hoped. George behaved surprisingly well. Indeed, considered as a jealous husband, he showed powers of histrionic dissimulation she'd never suspected him of possessing.
Perhaps because her husband's performance occupied the first place in her attention she found it hard to remember what a celebrity Charley Hawkins had become. It seemed natural to treat him just as she had

WHEN LEAST EXPECTED

BY J. A. WALDRON



THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY HAD BEEN ENTHUSIASTIC.

LYDIA BAYLEY and her fiancé, Glenn Lilley, quarreled, and as to them romance fled. What did they quarrel about? Love can tell? No third person knew. Love is set apart, and its secrets are inviolable except in cases in which matrimony and the courts are sequent. Then the newspapers horn in.
Lydia was artistic, and that means temperamental idiosyncrasy. Her father, potent in affairs and artistically himself in the sense that he was deft in accumulating money originally in other hands, and her mother, socially prominent, were sure Lydia was artistic and delighted in the fact. Not that they cared to have Lydia make a career, of course. An artistic daughter reflects credit upon her parents.
So Lydia, her romance shattered, declared she would live for her art alone, imagining that this was an original idea. And her parents, who had not objected to her fiancé, were pleased that she had something to divert her mind.
Young Lilley, who had enjoyed a sinecure in his father's banking house, disappeared from his former haunts, which socially were Lydia's, and adopted Greenwich Village, a neighborhood in which certain temptations may forget trouble, unless the trouble is vital, or develop it if they pine for excitement.
Lydia and Glenn had quarreled in the spring, when lovers usually are sympathetic. In the summer at Narragansett, where Lydia's mother led a set that thought little of other sets, Lydia painted feverishly. Local amateurs declared that her pictures were worthy of exhibition, and some of her work in elaborate frames was, in fact, shown on the walls of the family castle in company with paintings about which there was no doubt.
Returning to the family mansion in town in the autumn, Lydia became possessed with a desire to explore Greenwich Village. This obsession

she cherished secretly, for her parents were very conventional.
ONE day, taking luncheon alone in a smart restaurant on 5th avenue, Lydia encountered Marilla, who had been a chum at a finishing school. They had not seen each other in ages. It appeared that Marilla, ignoring her family's wishes, had jilted a fiancé who had money.
"And he had nothing else, dearest, absolutely!" she said to Lydia. "But I found a mate."
"Married?"
"Of course. And happy. My name is now De La Tour. My husband is a poet and a dramatist. And a socialist," Marilla added with a laugh.
Yet none of these vocations—nor all of them—had provided Marilla with clothes that at all resembled Lydia's. In fact, Marilla was enjoying luncheon in this smart place on the proceeds of sketches she had just sold to the advertising manager of a big shop, for she also was an artist. Her bobbed hair indicated it. "And where are you living?" Lydia asked.
"In Greenwich Village."
"Greenwich Village?" The words were magic to Lydia. "May I come to see you?"
"You can come home with me now—this minute! And meet my husband. I shall be due in a few minutes. He has been rehearsing one of his wonderful plays, called 'The Bird with a Broken Wing.' I shall want you for another play—'The Dissolved Pearl.'"
Lydia hesitated. "Of course, I should like to see a rehearsal, but as for acting—I may not be able to—I mean my mother and my father might not."
"We shall talk of that later, come."

women were chatting. He was interested to Lydia for a like reason. He looked like a not remote removal from a farmland. His abundant hair was long, after the old Thespian fashion. His collar and scarf were very prominent, and his coat had something of the careless amplitude of a gaudy dandy.
"You are the type!" he exclaimed to Lydia a moment after introduction. "Yes? I don't quite."
"Isn't she, darling?" he challenged Mrs. DeLaTour.
"He means, dear Lydia, that you are the type he wants for one of his plays."
"Do you mean that?" Lydia was incredulous.
"I always mean what I say," replied DeLaTour. "Have you ever acted?"
"No, except in an amateur way at school. But I'm told I read the classics well."
"The classics?" DeLaTour scoffed. "We of today are writing things that will relegate what are called the classics to oblivion. Come, darling!" He turned to Marilla. "Let's take your pretty friend to a rehearsal!"
"Of the play you think I—"
"Oh, no! A rehearsal of 'The Bird with a Broken Wing.' I shall want you for another play—'The Dissolved Pearl.'"
Lydia hesitated. "Of course, I should like to see a rehearsal, but as for acting—I may not be able to—I mean my mother and my father might not."
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been fully set—from which they might look on.
The pompous man was saying something to a young man and woman who had been impersonating lovers. He had praised the young woman, who was wearing a dress of the latest fashion, probably as a solace for criticism. The coach had told the young man he "was not at all like it."
Lydia looked, shrieked and fainted. The young man was Glenn Lilley. Everything became confusion. When a young woman who has quarreled and lost sight of her lover faints in such circumstances there is something the matter with her heart.
When Lydia came to she heard Glenn Lilley say, "I'm through!" in the face of protests from DeLaTour and the pompous man. Lydia's next realization was that she was in a cab with Glenn. "Where are we going?" she asked. Glenn's arm was about her. "I'm taking you home, dearest girl."
He answered, "How long have you been in Greenwich Village?"
"Only a few minutes. I never was there before."
"Thank heaven for that!" He was caressing her hair. "And that your hair isn't bobbed!"
"And are you going back to that girl?"
"Hello, there! Glenn! Stop!" boomed a basso-profundo voice as the brake on a great motor alongside shrieked, and the motor stopped. A heavy, gray-haired man leaped from the motor and came to the taxi, taking off his hat. "Where have you been?" he asked. It was Glenn's father.
"Finishing my education," Glenn replied, grinning.
"Where?"
"Greenwich Village."
"Huh! Among the softshells, eh?" "Oh, there are some nuts there."
"When are you coming home—and back to the bank?"
"Tomorrow, dad."

treated the boy he had been when he had made her listen to his verses and his terribly tragic little short stories, and encourage and console him—and refuse, with imperturbable friendliness, to fall in love with him.
He was curiously unchanged enough all his changes. The twenty pounds or so he had put on hadn't made him look older; had served only to accentuate the plump, cherubic look of boyish innocence there'd always been about him. He talked about himself a lot, just as he'd always done, taking the same pleasure in his great advances as he had in the little ones of long ago.
Emily shot an uneasy glance at George now and then; for instance, when Charley spoke offhand of the foremost American actress as Ethel she wondered whether George was saying to himself, "Ass!" But apparently George was not. He seemed to be enjoying the gossip of the theater as much as the tales of Carpi and Tahiti and other wondrous places the playwright had inhabited.
Emily herself didn't talk much. They drifted back occasionally into reminiscence; but since this, of course, excluded George, they didn't go far with it.

George had spoken of being busy, of the amount of time he'd have to spend upon a case that was coming up Monday, but he showed no signs of going off and leaving them to their own devices. She didn't know whether she wished he would or not. Intrinsically she wasn't specially anxious to be left alone with Charley—but if George was staying away from his work in order to watch them she was furious with him.
Only it didn't seem like that. The two men got around to the war, at last, and the humble but absorbing parts they had respectively played in it, and after an hour of this she bade them good night. This was, incidentally, as far as it was addressed to George; for she fully intended staying awake until he had come to bed and asking him a few questions, but her modest share of the unwanted alcohol made her sleepy and she never knew how late the two men and the bottle of Scotch sat up.
She got no chance next morning, either, for a private talk with George before they met their guest, and, in consequence, George's calm announcement of the day's program and his total elimination of himself from it fell upon her like a thunderclap. She caught him alone a few minutes after breakfast and asked him what he meant by mean anything by it; he protested. "I have got to work all day, just as I told you. Hawkins understands it, all right. I told him about it last night. He's got to leave this afternoon, and there's no good Sunday train from here, so it seemed decent to say that you'd drive him over to Rockport. You needn't take him to the club to lunch unless you like, but I thought it might be a pleasant change from sitting around the house."

"You're simply throwing me at his head!" she protested.
She detected a touch of bravado in the way he said: "Nonsense! He came to see you didn't he?" But Charley was already coming downstairs with his bag, so there wasn't time for anything more.
Well, the events of that day were in George's head, whatever they turned out to be.

GEORGE bade their guest a cordial, almost paternal, farewell, and, clapping his hat a little too much on one side of his head for a Sabbath morning and an hour when he was certain to meet their neighbors going to church, strolled down the street in the direction of his office.
It was 7 o'clock that evening when she stopped their car at the curb after her return alone from the fifteen-mile drive to Rockport. George was reclining on a sofa at his ease, upon the Gloucester swing on the veranda.
"Hello!" he called to her. "You back already? Had a good day?"
She chose to regard his second question as of a piece with the first and she came up the front steps before she spoke at all.
"I suppose you're fished for supper," she remarked. "If you've been working all day."
"Oh, I got home about an hour ago and scrambled myself some eggs. How about you?"
"I'm not specially hungry," she said. "I'll get myself a glass of milk by and by."
She sat down facing him. "George," she demanded, "why did you send for those three plays of Charley's?"
He sat up. "Why did I send—?"
"It was either you or Anna who sent for them," she interrupted. "Charley swears he didn't send them and that he didn't say anything to a soul about coming out here."
He lay back again. "Oh, all right," he conceded. "I telephoned to Chicago for 'em the morning after I found out he was coming."
"But why?" she insisted.
"Oh, I don't know. How could I know what he was going to be like? I didn't know what he was coming for. I saw he wanted you to be ready for him."
She took a minute or so to digest this reply. "I suppose you mean," she mused, "that you thought he might be coming out here to see how much of a hick the girl was that he wanted to marry once, after she'd lived twenty years in Avonia. And he wouldn't laugh, I suppose that afternoon dress Miss Maitland made for me doesn't look like much."
"Oh, damn!" he said, and got to his feet. "Look here, Emily! You're all right in any dress. It wasn't you I didn't feel sure about. But he might have been any sort of an ass. Of course, I saw he was all right before I'd talked with him ten minutes."
"No," she said. "You needn't have worried about that."

SHE let the voltage accumulate during a long silence. Then she added: "He kissed me this afternoon. He'd been rather sentimental all day, and when I said good-bye to him he kissed me."
"Well," said George, after a silence of his own, "he certainly is a darned nice fellow."
She stared at him, speechless.
"Oh, I'm not much surprised," he went on. "You see, he told me about it last night."
"Told you last night?" she echoed. "He didn't say he was going to kiss you," George exclaimed, "but he kept

me up half the night telling me how he felt about you. Said he'd always been romantic about you, and all the more after he'd got old enough to realize how kind you'd been to a ridiculous, priggish kid. He said you'd contributed more to his education than anybody else he'd ever met and he'd always felt grateful to you. Been wanting to come to see you for years, but was afraid to. Scared to death, he said he was, until he saw you were just as you had been; hadn't changed a hair. Actually wrote a telegram to say he wasn't coming and then tore it up."
"Well, then, wouldn't it be a day in the country?" he hoped you showed him a good time. I guess you did, or he wouldn't have kissed you."
He perceived now that she was crying. "I don't blame him for that a bit," he went on. "I think he showed darned good judgment. Because you are a peach, Emily, and that's the truth."

He patted her awkwardly on the shoulder. "Come on in, old lady," he concluded. "What do you say to some scrambled eggs? You're hungry, that's all the matter with you."
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More Than a Billion Stars
FOR years the approximate number of stars visible to the eye, a matter of 3,000 or 4,000, according to the definition of average vision, has been known. By most persons, however, and by many scientists the total number of stars in the heavens has been considered countless, if not limitless. The universe is now declared to be of a populousness far beyond all earlier conceptions. This assumption is a result of very recent investigations into the motions and distances of the stars.

The latest studies on the subject of the number as well as the light of the stars have been made at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, England. The late Franklin Adams succeeded in making a set of 266 photographs covering the entire sky. After counts were made of these pictures, from which the brightness of the self-luminous bodies between practically the twelfth and seventeenth magnitudes could be inferred it was concluded that they recorded about 55,000,000 stars. From this a formula was determined showing the change of number in passing from one magnitude to another.
With these figures it was reasoned that the aggregate number of stars is not less than 1,000,000,000, and probably approximately 1,600,000,000 the estimated present population of the earth. In making computations it was inferred that there would be as many stars fainter than magnitude 23 or 24 as there are brighter.

The magnitude of a star relates to its brightness, not to its size, for stars of the heavenly bodies there are so tremendous that there is not a single one which presents a measurable disk to the astronomer. Those stars brightest to the eye were long ago characterized as of the first magnitude, while the faintest were classed as of the sixth magnitude.
The average star of the first magnitude is shown by modern photometric measures to be 100 times brighter than one of the sixth, hence the ratio between successive magnitudes is set as the fifth root of 100 or about 2½. That is, a fifth-magnitude star is two and a half times brighter than one of the sixth magnitude, and so on. Altair and Aldebaran are standard first-magnitude stars, while the pole star is a standard of the second magnitude.
The planets are not strictly included in this system of brightness. Mars is as bright as a first-magnitude star, while Venus and Jupiter are brighter. The combined volume of light from all of the millions of stars fainter than magnitude 20—almost as dim as can be seen with the greatest telescope—is estimated to be equal to only three stars of the first magnitude, while the brightest star in the heavens, Sirius, is equivalent to eleven such stars. In the other hand, the full moon is approximately 100 times brighter than would be a self-luminous body with a light equal to that of all of the stars combined. It is because of their almost incredible distances from us that the stars, every one of them a sun, do not give us more light. Many of them would be brighter than our own sun were it possible to view them from a point as near as 32,000,000 miles. In that event, however, the earth would be promptly melted and vaporized, for it would be totally incapable of withstanding the heat that would be thrown off.
A New Thermometer.
ELECTRIC pyrometry, as the measure of temperature by electric means is called, has been so far perfected that it has been applied from near the absolute zero—about 490 degrees Fahrenheit below the ordinary zero—to the temperature of melting platinum, more than 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit above zero. There are two methods of measuring temperature by electrical means, one depending upon the increase of electrical resistance of a pure metal with increase of temperature, and the other on the production of an electromotive force in a circuit of two metals when one junction is kept at a constant temperature and the other is heated to the temperature which it is desired to measure. Many electric pyrometers give a continuous record of the temperature on a revolving drum.
Whirling Stars.
AMONG the most surprising discoveries of modern astronomy is that of double stars, which are close together that no telescope is able to show them separately, but whose "duplet" is revealed by their motion around one another. In consequence of this motion, one of the stars may be approaching the earth at the same time that its companion is retreating, and in that case the lines in the spectrum of their light will be "split." Such stars are called "spectroscopic binaries." Very few are known, but the most famous is the star Beta in the constellation Lupus. Two of these binaries are found to be revolving with velocities of 290 and 380 miles per second, respectively.